

What is claimed is:

1. A method to additionally test a patient's specimen contained in a sample container using an analyzer after tests on an aliquot portion taken from the patient's specimen are completed, the method comprising:
 - providing indicia on the sample container to indicate a period of time;
 - extracting a first aliquot portion of the patient's specimen;
 - providing an aliquot storage vessel;
 - extracting a second aliquot portion of the patient's specimen and retaining said second aliquot portion in said aliquot storage vessel;
 - operating the analyzer to perform tests on the first aliquot portion;
 - storing said aliquot storage vessel within a storage compartment within said analyzer;
 - maintaining said aliquot storage vessel within said compartment for said period of time; and,
 - additionally testing the specimen during said period of time.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the storage compartment comprises environmentally controlled conditions.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the tests to be performed upon a patient's specimen are examined to ascertain the period of time the patient's specimen is to be retained in storage.
4. The method of claim 1 where the aliquot storage vessel is an aliquot strip having a number of open aliquot wells therein.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein the aliquot storage vessel to be stored is covered with layer of protective film.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising disposing of said second aliquot portion of the patient's specimen after said period of time is expired.
7. The method of claim 1 wherein marking the sample container to indicate a period of time comprises providing a bar coded indicia on said sample container containing instructions that establish the period of time that the second sample aliquot is retained in the storage compartment after tests on the first sample aliquot are completed.
8. A method to additionally test a patient's specimen contained in a sample container using an analyzer after tests on an aliquot portion taken from the patient's specimen are completed, the method comprising:
 - providing indicia on the sample container to indicate tests to be completed;
 - extracting a first aliquot portion of the patient's specimen;
 - providing an aliquot storage vessel;
 - extracting a second aliquot portion of the patient's specimen and retaining said second aliquot portion in an aliquot storage vessel;
 - operating the analyzer to perform tests on the first aliquot portion;
 - storing said aliquot storage vessel within an environmentally controlled storage compartment within said analyzer; and,
 - maintaining said aliquot storage vessel within said compartment for a period of time determined by the tests identified in the indicia; and,
 - additionally testing the specimen during said period of time.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein tests for multiple analytes are to be performed on the specimen, and wherein the indicia on the sample container indicate a period of time associated with each of the multiple analytes, the method further comprising:
 - additionally testing the second aliquot portion for a given analyte only during a time period shorter than the period of time associated with the given analyte passes.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein tests for multiple analytes are to be performed on the specimen, and wherein the indicia on the sample container indicate a period of time associated with each of the multiple analytes, the method further comprising:

additionally testing the second aliquot portion for a given analyte during a time period after the period of time associated with the given analyte passes; and,

displaying an alert signal or message indicating that the additional test results were obtained on a specimen retained within the storage for period of time longer than the period of time associated with the given analyte.